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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUBLIN 000489

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL KPAL BUN

SUBJECT: IRISH RESPONSE TO PRE-GAERC DEMARCHE

REF: A. STATE 72185

¶B. DALY-O'MALLEY E-MAIL OF APRIL 12

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mary E. Daly; Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶11. (C) On April 22, Post delivered ref A talking points to Gerard Keown, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) EU Correspondent. In his responses, Keown focused primarily on Sudan and the Middle East Peace Process. He noted that Minister of State for Overseas Development, Conor Lenihan, had held "difficult" meetings in Khartoum prior to the Oslo Donors Conference, with the Sudanese Government dismissing his interventions about attacks on humanitarian personnel. Regarding the Middle East, Keown conveyed Irish Government concerns about a loss of momentum since the Sharm al-Sheik summit and the possibility that Israeli delays on Gaza disengagement and prisoner releases would undermine support for President Abbas.

Iraq

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¶12. (U) Ireland and the EU look forward to the Iraq conference as a way to reenergize reconstruction and the political transition, said Keown. He described Kurdish and Shiite openness to Sunni participation in the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG) at senior levels as an encouraging sign. Another welcome development was the willingness of outgoing Prime Minister Allawi's Iraqi National Accord party to join the cabinet of interim Prime Minister al-Jafari. Keown observed that the formation of the functional equivalent of a government of national unity would be critical as Iraqis began to draft a new constitution and to prepare for the planned December elections. He added that the EU would press ahead with assistance to the ITG, including police training and rule-of-law programs.

MEPP

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¶13. (C) Regarding the Middle East, Ireland and other Member States were worried by a seeming loss of momentum since the Sharm al-Sheik summit, reflected in delays with prisoner releases and Israeli withdrawals from West Bank towns, said Keown. He noted Ireland's concern that the Gaza withdrawal might prompt population transfers to the West Bank, which would be illegal under international law. Ireland and the EU therefore welcomed President Bush's recent firm statements to Prime Minister Sharon about the expansion of West Bank settlements. Ireland was also concerned that a soon-to-be-announced three-week delay in the Gaza withdrawal might turn into a rolling delay. Keown explained that the Irish Government recognized the internal political difficulties facing Sharon as he attempted to carry through on Gaza disengagement. By the same token, Israeli delays on Gaza and on other fronts might threaten to undermine support for President Abbas, who would soon face Palestinian parliamentary elections. Keown said that Ireland agreed with the U.S. point that Abbas should respond to Sharon's offer to coordinate on security arrangements, settlement assets, and economic/humanitarian issues relating to disengagement.

Lebanon

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¶14. (U) Like the United States, Ireland and the Member States were pleased with Prime Minister-designate Mikati's efforts to form a new Cabinet, pass an electoral law, and prepare for May elections, noted Keown. Ireland also recognized the importance of full Syrian compliance with UNSCR 1559 as well as the challenges involved in verifying the full withdrawal of Syrian intelligence assets. Keown said that the EU planned an observer mission for the elections and that polling, to be free and fair, would require an adequate security environment. He related the Irish Government's hope that the Lebanese people would continue to show the restraint that they had demonstrated since the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri.

¶15. (U) Keown said that the Irish Government had neither requested nor received a briefing on the situation in Lebanon by Peter Fitzgerald, the Deputy Irish Police Commissioner who headed the UN probe into the Hariri assassination. Keown explained that the Government had approved Fitzgerald's participation in the probe on the understanding that he would

report his findings exclusively to the UN. The Government continued to respect that understanding, remarked Keown.

Sudan

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16. (U) Member States, including Ireland, welcomed UNSC resolutions 1590, 1591, and 1593 as an admirable example of U.S.-EU cooperation, according to Keown. EU governments were also pleased with the April 11-12 Oslo Donors Conference on Sudan, which raised USD 4.5 billion, roughly twice the UN goal. Keown noted that Minister of State for Overseas Development and Human Rights, Conor Lenihan, had participated in the conference after having held "difficult" meetings the previous week in Khartoum with the Sudanese Government. Lenihan urged the GOS several times to rein in military activity and Arab militias in Darfur and to halt attacks on humanitarian personnel, but his interlocutors dismissed these interventions, blaming the current situation on rebel groups. Keown pointed out that Ireland had contributed euro 6 million toward Sudan in 2004 and would continue to support an expanded AMIS. The Irish Government was also considering a UN request to provide troops for the proposed peacekeeping force in southern Sudan, though Defense Minister Willie O'Dea had not yet made a decision. (Per ref B, it will likely be several weeks before Ireland responds to the UN request. Moreover, Irish support, if any, would probably be minimal, since Ireland is already near its self-imposed cap of 850 troops that can be deployed overseas.)

Zimbabwe

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17. (U) Keown said that the U.S. point about standing with the Zimbabwean people by providing humanitarian food aid, HIV/AIDS assistance, and support for civil society was "more critical than ever." He noted the importance of distinguishing between such assistance and acts that might legitimize Mugabe and ZANU-PF. He added that EU sanctions against Zimbabwe's ruling elites would remain in place and that Member States would not review the sanctions policy absent significant, positive changes by the Mugabe government.

Great Lakes

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18. (U) African leadership and international assistance have been effective in advancing the transition process in the Congo, said Keown. The tri-partite meetings had shown positive results, and the recent statement by the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) denouncing arms and genocide was an encouraging development. Keown noted that the Irish Government was closely monitoring the tri-partite meetings, having given financial assistance to the process. He added that Ireland did not underestimate the challenges involved in the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, and reintegration of fighters. The Irish Government believed that international assistance should focus on providing livelihoods to demobilized fighters in order to diminish the attraction of wages offered by warlords/rebel groups. Keown observed that it was regrettable that elections would not be held in June in accord with the Sun City agreement, as there was yet no electoral law. Ireland, he added, supported the U.S.-EU push for elections as soon as possible before year's end.

KENNY